THE BIG THREE: TEHERAN AND YALTA

The alliance of the three nations of Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union was cemented when Churchill flew into Moscow in May, 1942. He made two further such trips in August, 1942 and October, 1944. It was an unequal relationship from the beginning. The Soviets insisted, often rudely and sarcastically, that the Anglo-Saxons should open a second front in the West in order to draw 30 to 40 German divisions away from the Eastern Front – something the British and the Americans were not strong enough to do as yet. (There was a premature attempt in 1942, which ended in disaster.) Instead, they opened up another front in North Africa, and, recognizing the enormous importance of the Soviet-German front for the ultimate outcome of the war, they sent vast quantities of arms and supplies by convoy around the Northern Cape to Murmansk and Archangelsk – although many convoys were intercepted and destroyed by the Germans. Meanwhile, the Americans kept the British afloat with Lend-lease supplies from across the Atlantic.

The North African campaign, though often considered a "sideshow" compared to the huge battles taking place in Russia, was nevertheless important in that the victor would gain access to the oil-fields of the Middle East. And both sides poured large forces into the struggle. At first, it looked as if the German Africa Corps under Rommel would win. But he was stopped and then defeated in two battles at El Alamein in June-October, 1942 by British and Commonwealth forces. The saints of God also played a part in this victory. As John Sandopoulos explains, in the first battle of El – Alamein (which means "place of Menas"), where there was a ruined church of St. Menas, the saint appeared in front of the German army at the head of a troop of camels exactly as depicted on a fresco in his church and terrified the invaders.[1]

There could hardly have been a more paradoxical and contradictory alliance than that between the British lord and fierce anti-communist, Churchill, and the leader of the communist world revolution, Stalin. There is a Russian proverb that in certain situations one should be ready to use "even the devil and his grandma" - Stalin once quoted this to the British and American leaders.[2] But there is another, English proverb that the Anglo-Saxons could have quoted: "When you go to dinner with the devil, use a very long spoon". Unfortunately, the Anglo-Saxons tended to follow the Russian proverb more than their own, better one; for the tragic fact was that during the war, in order to drive out one demon, Hitler, they decided to enlist the aid of another, bigger demon,

[1] Sandopoulos, "The Miracle of Saint Menas in El Alamein in 1942", https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2010/11/miracle-of-saint-menas-in-el-alamein-in.html.

[2] Jonathan Fenby, *Alliance*, London: Pocket Books, 2006, p. 160.

Stalin. Thus they repeated the mistake of the good King Jehoshaphat of Judah, who was rebuked by God for allying himself with the wicked King Ahaziah, and was told: “Because you have allied yourself with Ahaziah, the Lord has destroyed your works” (II Chronicles 20.37).

As an inevitable result, while the smaller demon was defeated, the larger one triumphed… One British sailor, who later became an Orthodox subdeacon, was on a cruiser in the Mediterranean when he heard the news of the alliance between Britain and the Soviet Union. Turning to a friend of his, he said: “Before, we were fighting for God, king and country. Now we are fighting for king and country.”[3] For, of course, in fighting alongside the devil’s Stalin, they could not be fighting for God…

Demonology occupied the war leaders from the beginning. Thus when Hitler invaded Soviet Russia in 1941, Churchill told the House of Commons that if Hitler had invaded hell, he would have found it in himself “to make a favourable reference to the devil in the House of Commons”.[4] Again, when Churchill met Stalin for the first time, in May, 1942, Stalin wished him success in Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa.

“’May God help you,’ he added.

“’God, of course, is on our side,’ Churchill said.

“’And the devil is, naturally, on mine, and through our combined efforts we shall defeat the enemy,’ Stalin chuckled.”[5]

Very funny, no doubt, coming from the devil’s chief agent on earth… But the joke obscured, while at the same time pointing to, a supremely important truth: that God and the devil can never be on the same side, and that while God may use the devil and his servants towards his ultimate, supremely good aim, no human being can attempt to be so clever without destroying himself. For the ends do *not* justify the means: if we use evil means towards a good end, the end of it all will turn out to be evil…

Evidently, the deep meaning of this joke continued to occupy the minds of the leaders, because they returned to it at the Teheran conference in 1943.

“’God is on our side,’ Churchill said. ‘At least I have done my best to make Him a faithful ally.’

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[3] Subdeacon Paul Inglesby, personal communication.
[4] Fenby, op. cit., p. 65.
[5] Fenby, op. cit., p. 152.

"'And the devil is on my side,' Stalin chipped in. 'Because, of course, everybody knows that the devil is a Communist and God, no doubt, is a good Conservative.'…"[6]

"Ironically," writes Niall Ferguson, "Hitler said the same about the Japanese in May 1942: 'The present conflict is one of life or death, and the essential thing is to win – and to that end we are quite ready to make an alliance with the Devil himself.'"[7]

Nor were the Big Three averse to some straight blasphemy. Thus in Moscow in October, 1944 Churchill spoke of "our three great democracies" which were "committed to the lofty ideals of freedom, human dignity and happiness". Later, "When somebody compared the Big Three to the Holy Trinity, Stalin said Churchill must be the Holy Ghost because 'he is flying all over the place'"[8]

Stalin was now in a much more powerful position than he had been in 1941, and so he was not afraid to point out the great gulf between Soviet Communism and British Conservatism, even hinting that the two were *not* on the same side. Churchill, of course, as an old anti-communist warrior, was well aware of this - as Roosevelt, apparently, was not. Or if Roosevelt was aware, he chose to ignore this difference, while increasingly highlighting, to Churchill's great embarrassment, the ideological differences between imperialist Britain and the supposedly anti-imperialist United States. Moreover, he had a fatal pride in his ability to do business with the communist dictator, and win him over through charm alone. As he said to Churchill in 1942: "I know you will not mind my being brutally frank when I tell you that I think I can personally handle Stalin better than either your Foreign Office or my State Department. Stalin hates the guts of all your top people. He thinks he likes me better, and I hope he will continue to do so."[9]

Jean-François Revel recounts how, during the Teheran Conference, Roosevelt "even went in for elaborate jokes that rubbed Winston Churchill's prejudices the wrong way. After three days of talks during which Stalin remained icy, the President recounted that, at last, 'Stalin smiled'. A great victory for the West! It became total when 'Stalin broke out into a deep, heavy guffaw, and for the first time in three days I saw light. I kept it up until Stalin was laughing with me, and it was then that I called him Uncle Joe.' Democracy was saved."[10]

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[6] Fenby, op, cit., p. 239. He repeated the point once more in Teheran.
[7] Ferguson, *The War of the World*, London: Penguin, 2007, p. 511, footnote.
[8] Fenby, op, cit., pp. 331, 333; David Reynolds, "Confidence and Curve Balls", *The New Statesman*, December 7, 2018, p. 55.
[9] Roosevelt, in Reynolds, op. cit., p. 376.
[10] Revel, *How Democracies Perish*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1985, p. 220.

Churchill was now in a much weaker position in relation to both Stalin and Roosevelt, being almost entirely dependent on Stalin to defeat Hitler on land, and on Roosevelt to supply his island with arms and food by sea. And so he was afraid to highlight *any* ideological differences between the three. In fact, by this time both Churchill and Roosevelt were well on the path towards full appeasement of the bloody dictator – an appeasement that was even worse than that of Munich, and which had a much profounder, longer and more degrading influence on the behaviour of the western democracies…

Churchill was not unaware of the comparison with Munich. As he once said to his ministers: "Poor Neville Chamberlain believed he could trust Hitler. He was wrong, but I don't think I'm wrong about Stalin."[11] He was.

This abandonment of principle was especially striking in the case of Churchill – and not only in relation to Stalin's Communism. A.N. Wilson writes perceptively: "Churchill suffered almost more than any character in British history from watching his most decisive acts have the very opposite effect of the one intended. He who so deplored communism saw Eastern Europe go communist; he, who loved the British Empire, lost the Empire; and he who throughout his peacetime political career had lambasted socialism presided over an administration which was in many ways the most socialist government Britain ever had. While Churchill directed the war he left domestic policy to his socialist colleagues Attlee and Bevin. The controlled wartime economy, rationing, propaganda newsreels, austere 'British restaurants' for food, and the tightest government control over what could be bought, sold, said, publicly worn, produced what A.J.P. Taylor called 'a country more fully socialist than anything achieved by the conscious planners of Soviet Russia'."[12]

It all began very differently, with the agreement known as the Atlantic Charter in August, 1941. Britain and America agreed then that they would seek no territorial gains in the war; that territorial gains would be in accordance with the wishes of the peoples concerned; that all peoples had the right to self-determination; that trade barriers were to be lowered; that there was to be global economic cooperation and advancement of social welfare; that the participants would work for a world free of want and fear; that the participants would work for freedom of the seas; and that there was to be disarmament of aggressor nations, and a postwar common disarmament. In September a number of other western and Asiatic

[11] Reynolds, op. cit., p. 57.
[12] Wilson, *After the Victorians*, p. 403.

nations signed up to these principles. And on January 1, 1942 the Soviet Union and China, among other countries, also signed up.[13]

The Soviets had no intention of granting self-determination to the countries they had first conquered during their alliance with the Nazis. As Norman Stone writes, "Churchill did not have the strength to resist Stalin, and the Americans did not have the will."[14] Already by the Teheran Conference in November, 1943 the Allies had effectively given in. "'Now the fate of Europe is settled,' Stalin remarked, according to Beria's son. 'We shall do as we like, *with the Allies' consent*.'"[15] Or, as Churchill put it in October, 1944: "[It's] all very one-sided. They get what they want by guile, flattery or force."[16]

An important factor on Roosevelt's thinking was American public opinion, whose volatility at this point vividly illustrated one of the main weaknesses of democracy. Polls revealed that as late as 1939, as Hugh Brogan writes, that Americans, "if forced to choose, would have picked fascism rather than communism, since communism waged war on private property." However, "by 1942 the majority found no words too kind for Stalin and his armies. The switch was made easier by the comfortable delusion, assiduously propagated, that the USSR had abandoned communism. 'Marxian thinking in Soviet Russia,' said the *New York Times* in April 1944, 'is out. The capitalist system, better described as the competitive system, is back.' That granted, the architect of the Gulag archipelago, many of whose crimes had long ago been public knowledge, could be eulogized as the man who saved the capitalist world. 'A child,' it was said, 'would like to sit on his lap and a dog would sidle up to him.' The NKVD was 'a national police similar to the FBI and the Russians, 'one hell of a people', were remarkably like the Americans. Communism was like Christianity, being based on the brotherhood of man; and as Douglas MacArthur commented… from Corregidor in 1942, 'The hopes of civilization rest on the banners of the courageous Red Army.' Hollywood leaped onto the bandwagon by issuing a tedious, fellow-travelling movie, *Mission to Moscow,* which one day would get its makers into a lot of trouble…"[17]

Roosevelt himself, who had successfully fended off charges of being a socialist dictator in the 1930s, now seemed a full convert to Stalinism. Thus already on February 20, 1943, he wrote to the Jew Zabrousky, who acted as liaison officer between himself and Stalin, that the USSR could be assured of control of most of Europe after the war with full equality with the other "tetrarchs" (Britain, America

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[13] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic_Charter; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration_by_United_Nations.
[14] Stone, *The Atlantic and its Enemies*, London: Penguin, 2010, p. 5.
[15] Fenby, op. cit., p. 211. My italics (V.M.).
[16] Fenby, op. cit., p. 331.
[17] Brogan, *The Penguin History of the USA,* London: Penguin, 2019, p. 580.

and China) in the post-war United Nations Security Council: “You can assure Stalin that the USSR will find herself on a footing of complete equality, having an equal voice with the United States and England in the direction of the said Councils (of Europe and Asia). Equally with England and the United States, she will be a member of the High Tribunal which will be created to resolve differences between the nations, and she will take part similarly and identically in the selection, preparation, armament and command of the international forces which, under the orders of the Continental Council, will keep watch within each State to see that peace is maintained in the spirit worthy of the League of Nations. Thus these inter-State entities and their associated armies will be able to impose their decisions and to make themselves obeyed…

“We will grant the USSR access to the Mediterranean [overriding the territorial claims of Turkey]; we will accede in her wishes concerning Poland and the Baltic, and we shall require Poland to show a judicious attitude of comprehension and compromise [i.e. surrender to all Stalin’s demands]; Stalin will still have a wide field for expansion in the little, unenlightened [sic!] countries of Eastern Europe – always taking into account the rights which are due to the fidelity of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia – he will completely recover the territories which have temporarily been snatched from Great Russia.”[18]

The essential truth of the Zabrousky letter was confirmed by Cardinal Spellman in a book by R.I. Gannon, SJ, *The Cardinal Spellman Story*. Describing a long talk he had had with Roosevelt on September 3, 1943, he wrote: “It is planned to make an agreement among the Big Four. Accordingly the world will be divided into spheres of influence: China gets the Far East; the US the Pacific; Britain and Russia, Europe and Africa. But as Britain has predominantly colonial interests it might be assumed that Russia will predominate in Europe. Although Chiang Kai-shek will be called in on the great decisions concerning Europe, it is understood that he will have no influence on them. The same thing might become true – although to a lesser degree –for the US. He hoped, ‘although it might be wishful thinking’, that the Russian intervention in Europe would not be too harsh.

“*League of Nations:* The last one was no success, because the small states were allowed to intervene. The future league will consist only of the four big powers (US, Britain, Russia, China). The small states will have a consultative assembly, without right to decide or to vote. For example, at the armistice with Italy, the Greeks, Jugoslavs and French asked to be co-signers. ‘We simply turned them down.’ They have no right to sit in where the big ones

[18] Roosevelt, in Count Léon de Poncins, *State Secrets*, Chulmleigh: Britons Publishing Company, 1975, pp. 77, 78.

are. Only the Russians were admitted, because they are big, strong and simply impose themselves.

"*Russia:* An interview with Stalin will be forced as soon as possible. He believes that he will be better fitted to come to an understanding with Stalin than Churchill. Churchill is too idealistic, he [Roosevelt] is a realist. So is Stalin. Therefore an understanding between them on a realistic basis is probable. The wish is, although it seems improbable, to get from Stalin a pledge not to extend Russian territory beyond a certain line. He would certainly receive: Finland, the Baltic States, the Eastern half of Poland, Bessarabia. There is no point to oppose these desires of Stalin, because he has the power to get them anyhow. So better give them gracefully.

"Furthermore the population of Eastern Poland wants to become Russian [!]. Still it is absolutely not sure whether Stalin will be satisfied with these boundaries. On the remark that Russia has appointed governments of communistic character for Germany, Austria and other countries which can make a communist regime there, so that the Russians might not even need to come, he agreed that this is to be expected. Asked further, whether the Allies would not do something from their side which might offset this move in giving encouragement to the better elements, just as Russia encourages the Communists, he declared that no such move was contemplated [!!]. It is therefore probably that Communist Regimes would expand, but what can we do about it. France might eventually escape if it has a government *à la* Leon Blum. The Front Populaire would be so advanced, that eventually the Communists would accept it. On the direct questions whether Austria, Hungary and Croatia would fall under some sort of Russian protectorate, the answer was clearly yes. But he added, we should not overlook the magnificent economic achievements of Russia. Their finances are sound. It is natural that the European countries will have to undergo tremendous changes in order to adapt to Russia, but in hopes that in ten or twenty years the European influences would bring the Russians to become less barbarian.

"Be that as it may, he added, the US and Britain cannot fight the Russians..."[19]

The eventual post-war outcome, though very bad, was not quite as bad as Roosevelt envisaged. But no thanks to him! His attitude of defeatism and surrender in relation to Stalin, his plans, in spite of his democratic ideals and his acceptance of the Atlantic Charter, to surrender most of Europe to the worst despotism in human history (while trying to break up the far milder tyranny of Britain over her colonies[20]), involuntarily makes one think that he was somehow bewitched by Stalin! What is certain is that, as the American

[19] Spellman, in de Poncins, op. cit., pp. 89-90.

ambassador to Moscow, Averill Harriman, said: “Roosevelt never understood communism. He viewed it as a sort of extension of the New Deal.”[21]

Roosevelt’s claim that the Russians could take everything they wanted anyway was false. The Allies’ shipments of all kinds of supplies (suffering huge losses along the North Cape route) were vital to the Soviet war effort[22], and they could have threatened to stop these in exchange for concessions. But the Americans seemed determined to allow the Soviet maximum freedom to do what they liked without regard to the Atlantic Charter or the rights of smaller nations… This was true not only of Roosevelt but also of his Foreign Secretary, Cordell Hull. “What he wanted from the conference was a grand declaration on the post-war international organization. The future of smaller European nations was of no concern to him – ‘I don’t want to deal with these piddling little things,’ he told Harriman, adding that Poland was a ‘Pandora’s box of infinite trouble’ best left unopened.”[23]

But the British could not easily give up on Poland, for whose sake they had entered the war in September, 1939, and which contributed many tens of thousands of soldiers and airmen to the

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[20] Roosevelt wanted Britain to give India her independence even before the end of the war, and to give Hong Kong to China. His officials also wanted Britain to give up the system of Imperial Preference, the tariff system which protected British exports to the Empire.

[21] Revel, op. cit., pp. 219-220.

[22] Ferguson writes: “All told, Stalin received supplies worth 93 billion roubles, between 4 and 8 per cent of Soviet net material product. The volumes of hardware suggest that these official statistics understate the importance of American assistance: 380,000 field telephones, 363,000 trucks, 43,000 jeeps, 6,000 tanks and over 5,000 miles of telephone wire were shipped along the icy Arctic supply routes to Murmansk, from California to Vladivostok, or overland from Persia. Thousands of fighter planes were flown along an ‘air bridge’ from Alaska to Siberia. Nor was it only hardware that the Americans supplied to Stalin. Around 58 per cent of Soviet aviation fuel came from the United States during the war, 53 per cent of all explosives and very nearly half of all the copper, aluminium and tyres, to say nothing of the tons of tinned Spam – in all, somewhere between 41 and 63 per cent of all Soviet military supplies. American engineers also continued to provide valuable technical assistance, as they had in the early days of Magnitogorsk” (op. cit., p. 529). The general value of aid amounted to 12 billion dollars in 1941 prices, or 200 billion in contemporary terms. Russia repaid just 7% of this sum, and that only at the beginning of the 1990s. The rest of the debt was written off by the allies (http://peaceinukraine.livejournal.com/2901882.html).

“74% of the tanks employed by the Russians at the battle of Moscow in December, 1941 were imported from Britain. However, Norman Davies argues that Western supplies were less important to the Soviets in the early stages of the war. “British tanks were not what the Red Army needed, and British Army greatcoats (like German greatcoats) were totally unsuited to the Russian winter. The Soviets had already gained the upper hand *on their own account before Western aid began to reach them in quantity” (Europe at War,* London: Pan Books, 2006, p. 484)

[23] Fenby, op. cit., p. 208.

British Armed Forces. So Churchill continued to support the Polish government-in-exile and its underground army in Poland while Stalin built up another, communist underground army and government (the Lublin Committee). One of the reasons why he stopped on the eastern side of Vistula and did not allow the Red Army to aid the Warsaw uprising in August, 1944 was his desire to winkle out the Polish royalists and have them destroyed – whether by the Germans or his own men.

In September, writes Fenby, "though Stalin now claimed that he had been misinformed about the reasons for the rising, the Red Army still did not advance as anti-Communist Polish forces in the city were reduced to a handful. The deadly inaction had done the Lublin Committee's work for it. Reporting to Washington, Harriman concluded that Stalin did not want the Poles to take credit for the liberation of Warsaw, and wished the underground leaders to be killed by Nazis or stigmatised as enemies who could be arrested when the Russians entered. 'Under these circumstances,' he added, 'it is difficult for me to see how a peaceful or acceptable solution can be found to the Polish problem…'"[24]

But Churchill, too, made unacceptable compromises. Thus he, like the Americans, turned a blind eye to Stalin's slaughter of 20,000 of Poland's elite at Katyn, rejecting the correct accusation of the Polish government-in-exile and accepting the lie that the Germans had done it. This had the consequence that the Kremlin broke relations with the Poles, which in turn "allowed Stalin in due course to create a rival government-in-exile loyal to Moscow".[25]

Again, when Foreign Minister Sir Anthony Eden visited Stalin in October, 1943, he "carried a note by Churchill recognizing that Moscow's accession to the Atlantic Charter had been based on the frontiers of June 11, 1941, and taking note of 'the historic frontiers of Russia before the two wars of aggression waged by Germany in 1914 and 1939'".[26] In other words, Germany's conquests in Poland after the shameful Molotov-Ribbentrop pact were not to be recognized, but Russia's were!

The difference between Roosevelt and Churchill was that the latter, unlike the former, sometimes got angry with the dictator and did wrestle some concessions from him. Thus his famous percentages agreement with Stalin in October, 1944 over spheres of influence in Eastern Europe was firmly adhered to by Stalin, enabling Greece to escape the communist yoke. And yet this concession could have been greatly improved on if only the Americans had accepted the British plan, put forward at Quebec in

[24] Fenby, op. cit., p. 301.
[25] Reynolds, op. cit., p. 54.
[26] Fenby, op. cit., p. 207.

August, 1943, of attacking Hitler in the Western Balkans. In the next month, Italy surrendered; so the time was right. The implementation of such a plan would not only have saved the Balkans from communist domination: it would have shortened the war with Germany considerably. But the Americans were always irritated by the British insistence on the Mediterranean theatre of operations. Earlier in the war Churchill had concentrated British forces on North Africa and the defence of Egypt, because if the Germans had conquered the Suez Canal they would have cut off the British from the oil of the Persian Gulf, on which they were critically dependent, as well as from India and their Far Eastern colonies. Later, after the Germans had been expelled from North Africa, he favoured an attack on the "soft underbelly" of the Axis powers in Italy because he feared that an attack on the "hard snout" of the German defences in Northern France might lead to a disaster on the scale of Gallipoli or Dunkirk. In this he was probably right, as the disastrous Canadian assault on Dieppe in 1942 proved. However, the battle for Italy proved tougher than expected – more like the "tough guts" of the underbelly, as the American General Mark Clark put it. In July, 1943, two days after the Allies had landed in Sicily and capture Palermo, Mussolini was deposed by Italy's great council. However, the Germans took over the defence of the peninsula, and the Allies did not conquer Rome until June 5, 1944, only one day before D-Day and the invasion of Normandy – to which Churchill was by this time grudgingly reconciled.[27]

Another strategic error of the Americans was their rejection of Churchill's idea of invading Yugoslavia and helping the powerful Yugoslav resistance to drive the Germans out of the Balkans. Instead, as Misha Glenny writes, they insisted "instead on driving up through difficult Italian terrain in preparation for Operation Dragoon, the seaborne assault on southern and western France. 'I still don't understand,' noted General Rendulic, the man coordinating the Wehrmacht's struggle against Tito, 'why the Allies gave up their drive across the Balkans after they had taken Sicily in August [1943]. Instead, they sustained many losses over a period of months as they squeezed their way through the narrow roads of the Italian peninsula before finally landing on the West coast of France, far away from all the strategic theatres of war. I am convinced that by giving up an assault on the Balkans in 1943, the Allies might have postponed the end of the war by a year.'"[28]

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[27] David Reynolds, "1942 and Hitler's Soft Underbelly", BBC4 documentary, September 18, 2016.

[28] Glenny, *The Balkans, 1804-1999*, London: Granta Books, 2000, p. 519. The Allies would have had even more casualties in Italy if the British, through a brilliant intelligence operation called "Operation Mincemeat", had not deceived the Germans into thinking that the invasion of July, 1943 would be into Greece, not Sicily.

Churchill raised the idea of a joint Anglo-American thrust into the Balkans at the famous conference of the Big Three at Yalta in February, 1945. But neither Stalin nor Roosevelt responded. Stalin's resistance was understandable – he wanted the Red Army, not the Anglo-Americans, to dominate the Balkans. Roosevelt's resistance was less clear; probably he simply wanted to demonstrate to Churchill that he was very much the junior partner in the Anglo-American alliance now, and that "the Big Three" were now, as one American put it, "the Big Two-and-a-Half"...

In any case, the idea was dead...[29]

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Although Yalta has been seen as the decisive meeting of the Allies, as Tony Judt rightly says, "nothing was decided at Yalta that had not already been agreed at Teheran and elsewhere".[30] By then, Stalin already held all the cards. Not only was the Red Army already in effective control of most of Eastern and Central Europe (its forward units were 70 kilometers from Berlin while the Western Allies were 600 kilometers away). Through his listening devices at Yalta and his spies in the West – especially Guy Burgess in the British Foreign Office, Donald Maclean in the British Embassy in Washington, Alger Hiss in the State Department, Harry Dexter White at the US Treasury and Klaus Fuchs at the Manhattan Project in New Mexico – he knew exactly what the plans of the western leaders were, what they wanted in their negotiations with him, what they wanted to hid from him (for example, the building of the atomic bomb) and what their disagreements amongst themselves were.[31]

Indeed, Roosevelt did everything he could to demonstrate to the Soviets that he was not in agreement with the British on many points, and sabotaged all attempts to establish a joint Anglo-American position before the beginning of the conference. He appeared to prefer the role of mediator between the Soviets and the British perhaps because this gave him more flexibility in his negotiations with Stalin, over whom he counted on being able to work his charm.[32] Or perhaps he was deliberately aiming at giving the Soviets the very large sphere of influence as envisaged in the Zabrusky letter (though formally he rejected the idea of "spheres of influence"). In any case, his behavior annoyed the British and definitely strengthened the Soviet negotiating position.

"Roosevelt was even forthcoming enough," writes Jean-François Revel, "to tell Stalin he did not think American troops could remain in Europe for more than two years after Germany's surrender.

[29] S.M. Plokhy, *Yalta: The Price of Peace*, London: Penguin, 2010, p. 85.
[30] Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*, London: Paladin, 2007, p. 101.
[31] Plokhy, op. cit., pp. 78-79.
[32] Plokhy, op. cit., pp. 101, 35.

Besides, he said, he did not believe in maintaining strong American forces in Europe. He couldn't have been more obliging. By informing Stalin in advance that American troops would be withdrawn and when, Roosevelt was behaving like a home owner who put up posters to tell local burglars when he planned to take his vacation and leave the apartment unguarded.

"Armed with this assurance, Stalin could calmly lay his postwar plans. First he demanded that the Allies grant him full control over the areas Germany had promised him in the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact, the only real agreement to divide up territory signed in the twentieth century. He was instantly granted the Baltic states and chunks of Finland and Romania – in other words, everything Hitler had awarded him in 1939. But Poland… was not delivered over to Stalin in any of the accords reached in February, 1945. He took it by trickery and force…"[33]

Poland was the one question on which both the Americans and the British dug their heels in – for a time. They, like almost all Poles, recognized only the London government-in-exile, while the Soviets recognized only their puppets, the Lublin Committee. However, after Roosevelt had obtained two of his goals from Stalin – the foundation of the United Nations and the Soviet entry into the war with Japan – his resistance effectively collapsed. The British conducted a spirited rearguard action, but effectively the battle was lost: it was the Lublin regime that was recognized, albeit "reorganized" and with the promise of "fair" elections in which non-communists could take part.

The British had some smaller victories to make up for this, their greatest defeat. One was the inclusion of the French in the Allied Control Commission and the creation of the French occupation zone. Stalin had opposed this, but he surrendered after Roosevelt changed his mind and swung behind the British position.

Another British victory was over the question of reparations from Germany. Stalin demanded $20 billion in reparations, with $10 billion going to the Soviets. Churchill and Eden argued that such an enormous demand would jeopardize Germany's economic recovery, which was vital to the economy of the whole world; it would mean that they would have no money to pay for imports, which would hinder other countries' export trade; and it would threaten mass unemployment and starvation in Germany, not to mention the resurrection of that resentment which had played such an important part in the rise of Hitler after the First World War. They were supported by a letter from the British war cabinet which said that this huge sum could not be paid "by a Germany which has been bombed, defeated, perhaps dismembered and unable to pay for

[33] Revel, op. cit., pp. 270-271.

imports". Molotov mocked the British: "The essence of Eden's statement comes down to taking as little from Germany as possible". Stalin employed the same tactic, asking Churchill whether he was "scared" by the Soviet request. But Churchill held his ground. And then Roosevelt once again changed course and backed the British. "Under pressure from the State Department and seeking to placate the media, Roosevelt had abandoned the Morgenthau plan, but could easily return to some of its provisions in spirit if not in letter, to placate the Soviets."[34] With great reluctance, the Soviet dictator accepted that the amount and nature of reparations should be decided by the Reparations Commission, to which both sides would present their proposals. Here was another demonstration of how much more could have been achieved if the western allies had always worked together…

If at the top of Stalin's wish-list was his complete control over Poland, German reparations and the return of all Soviet prisoners of war (about which more in a later chapter), Roosevelt's main desires were for the Soviets' entry into the war against Japan, and the establishment of the United Nations. Stalin agreed to enter the war against Japan three months after a German surrender, but extracted a high price – mainly at the expense of China, but also at the expense of Roosevelt's loudly proclaimed principles of political behaviour. For in a secret agreement, to which even the British were not party, Roosevelt agreed that the Soviets should take control of the Kurile islands, southern Sakhalin, Port Arthur, the Manchurian railroads, and that outer Mongolia should become an independent country (under Soviet control, naturally).

Thus were the worst fears of the Chinese nationalists realized. They naturally wanted to free their country not only from the Japanese but also from the Chinese Communists, whose allies, of course, were the Soviet Communists. But Roosevelt wanted not only to hand large chunks of China to the Soviets, but also to appease the Chinese Communists.

However, as Fenby writes, "Despite US efforts, Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong were intent on renewing their civil war. The Generalissimo remarked pointedly to Patrick Hurely, who had become the US ambassador, that he did not want a repetition in his country of what had happened in Poland and Yugoslavia. His perennial concern about the reliability of American support was deepened by the discovery of an OSS plan to train and equip the Communists…"[35]

The Far Eastern agreement, together with other, less important agreements on Iran, the Dardanelles and the Balkans, demonstrate

[34] Plokhy, op. cit., p. 259.
[35] Fenby, op. cit., p. 347.

in a fascinating way how the foreign policy aims of Stalin in 1945 and of Tsar Nicholas over thirty years earlier were very similar – except, of course, that the means they chose to their ends were completely different, and that Stalin's end was to strengthen the kingdom of Satan over these territories, whereas the Tsar's end had been precisely the opposite, to strengthen Orthodoxy. The Yalta conference took place in the Tsar's former villa in Livadia, and Stalin arrived in the Crimea in the Tsar's former railway carriage. Nothing demonstrated more clearly the essence of the situation: the temporary triumph of evil over good, of the enemies of Russia over Holy Rus', of the Antichrist over Christ…

The Soviet press lauded the Yalta agreements. The Western press also lauded it, and all the members of the American and British delegations to Yalta thought it had been a success and "Uncle Joe" a most pleasant and cooperative negotiator. Roosevelt and his adviser Hopkins were in "a state of extreme exultation", according to Hopkins' biographer,[36], and Roosevelt expressed his firm faith in Stalin in Congress. He had seen through Hitler early on, even before he had embarked on his worst crimes. But he completely failed to understand Stalin and the essence of communism – even after he had proved himself the greatest murderer in history… Only in the very last days of his life (he died on April 12, 1945) did he express distrust of Stalin…[37]

As for Churchill, he was, as always, a mass of contradictions. On the last day at Yalta, as the other leaders left, he said to Eden: "The only bond of the victors is their common hate".[38] And he continued to express fears about the future – especially, and with good reason, in regard to Poland. But he did so only in private.[39] In public he joined in the general dithyrambs to the collective Antichrist. As he said in the House of Commons: "Most solemn declarations have been made by Marshal Stalin and the Soviet Union that the sovereign independence of Poland is to be maintained, and this decision is now joined in both by Great Britain and the United States… The impression I brought back from the Crimea, and from all my other contacts, is that Marshal Stalin and the Soviet leaders wish to live in honourable friendship and equality with the Western democracies. I feel also that their word is their bond. I know of no Government which stands to its obligations, even in its own despite,

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[36] Fenby, op. cit., p. 381.

[37] Victor Sebestyen, *1946: The Making of the Modern World*, London: Pan, 2014, pp. 88-89.

[38] Fenby, op. cit., p. 379.

[39] Thus on March 8 he wrote to Roosevelt: "The Russians have succeeded in establishing [in Eastern Europe] the rule of a communist minority by force and misrepresentation… which is absolutely contrary to all democratic ideas… Stalin has subscribed on paper to the principles of Yalta which are certainly being trampled down." And again he wrote on March 13: "We are in the presence of a great failure and utter breakdown of what was agreed at Yalta" (Paul Ham, *Hiroshima Nagasaki*, London: Doubleday, 2010, p. 10).

more solidly than the Russian Soviet Government. I decline absolutely to embark here on a discussion about Russian good faith…"[40]

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Perhaps the most important agreement at Yalta was the Declaration on Liberated Europe. Ferguson writes: "To foster the conditions in which the liberated peoples may exercise those [democratic] rights, all three governments will jointly assist the people in any European liberated state or former Axis satellite state in Europe" to form representative governments and facilitate free elections. But Stalin had no intention of keeping this pledge, as the western leaders soon discovered to their fury. However, their protests fell on deaf ears. It could not have been otherwise. The Allies supped with the devil at Yalta, although they knew all about his demonism, and returned fatally poisoned. As Ferguson puts it: "The wartime alliance with Stalin, for all its inevitability and strategic rationality, was nevertheless an authentically Faustian bargain…"[41]

And it immediately involved lying: lying, for example, about Stalin's slaughter of the Polish elite at Katyn, lying about the abandonment of Eastern Europe in general. For if "totalitarianism probably demands a disbelief in the very existence of objective truth" (George Orwell), those who cooperate with it are bound to become infected with its mendacity.

Max Hastings writes: "The Americans and British had delivered half Europe from one totalitarian tyranny, but lacked the political will and the military means to save ninety million people of the eastern nations from falling victim to a new, Soviet bondage that lasted almost half a century. The price of having joined with Stalin to destroy Hitler was high indeed…"[42]

The question is: could the Allies have acted differently? Plokhy's conclusion is: no. "There were of course other possibilities, but they had the potential of leading to a new war before the old one was over. Joseph Goebbels nourished high hopes as he followed the coverage of inter-Allied tensions in the Western media from his hideout in Berlin. If one were to take Stalin's fears as a guide to policy alternatives, then a separate peace with the dying Nazi regime or, more realistically, an armistice leading to the end of hostilities on the western front, could have been adopted instead of the policy that Roosevelt and Churchill followed at Yalta. These options could only be perceived as dead ends by the two Western

[40] Plokhy, op. cit., p. 335.
[41] Ferguson, op. cit., p. 511.
[42] Hastings, *All Hell Let Loose*, London: Harper Press, 2011, pp. 654-654.

leaders, who were committed to leading their nations and the long-suffering world toward peace. As Charles Bohlen wrote to George Kennan [the architect of the western policy of containment in the Cold War] from Yalta, regarding his proposal to divide Europe in half: 'Foreign policy of that kind cannot be made in democracy.'"[43]

It is this last point that is the most important. There are *always* alternatives; kow-towing to Stalin was by no means inevitable. However, a successful war against apocalyptic evil – for that is what the war against the Soviet Antichrist was in reality – could only be undertaken by a leader who truly led his people and was not led by them, who could inspire them to "blood, sweat and tears" not only in defence of their own sovereignty but for the sake of some higher, supra-national ideal – in essence a religious ideal in obedience to God and for the sake, not of earthly survival only, but of salvation for eternity.

But democracy, as has been noted many times in this Universal History, is a mode of political life that is centred entirely on secular, earthly goals. An exceptional democratic leader may briefly be able to raise his people to a higher than usual level of courage and personal self-sacrifice, as Roosevelt did America in 1933 and Churchill did Britain in 1940. But the aim remains earthly – in Roosevelt's case, economic recovery, and in Churchill's, national survival.[44]

Moreover, even an exceptional leader cannot run far in front of his people, by whom he is elected and to whom he remains answerable; and so far no democratic nation has voted for a leader that will sacrifice earthly survival for some heavenly ideal. That is the lesson of Churchill's defeat in the British elections in 1945. The people were tired of war (as they had also been in 1919, when Churchill again tried to inspire them to continue fighting against the Soviets after defeating the Germans), and certainly did not want to undertake another war against Soviet Russia. So an inspirational leader of the Churchillian type was not what they wanted, and in a democracy the people gets what it wants, whether it is good for them or not. They wanted a new leader who would concentrate once again on earthly matters – tax rates, redistribution of wealth, a National Health Service, etc. A despot like Stalin can do more than a democratic leader in propelling his people to feats of self-sacrifice – as Stalin did the Soviet people in 1941-45. But they are compelled to such feats by fear, and if they have a love which is stronger than their fear, it is nevertheless inevitably for an earthly, secular ideal.

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[43] Plokhy, op. cit., p. 399.

[44] As he put it in parliament in May, 1940: "What is our aim?... Victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror; victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival."

Only an Orthodox Autocrat can inspire his people to sacrifice themselves for a truly heavenly ideal, even if that spells the end of all their earthly hopes. St. Lazar was an Orthodox Autocrat who inspired the Serbs to sacrifice everything for the Heavenly Kingdom on Kosovo field. Tsar Nicholas II was a man of comparable quality who also looked to heavenly rather than earthly crowns (even if the great mass of his people did not). But by 1945 there were no more Orthodox Autocrats; Stalin's victory in 1945 consolidated Lenin's in 1917. Autocracy, the only truly God-pleasing form of political life, was – temporarily - no more…

June 22 / July 5, 2020.
St. Alban, Protomartyr of the British Isles.